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THE NEW
PHILOSOPHY

PART I.

19.117.



Abbots

1857



THE

NEW PHILOSOPHY.

PART I.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN these times, when knowledge of all sorts is making such general progress, and science continually opening further discoveries in nature, and also the means of practically applying them, it doubly imports that the moral progress—the progress of the mind—should be equally attended to. I say, doubly; for first, the mind, as mind, is of most consequence, and that therefore should be set in a state to take right views and form just conclusions, is the primary concern; for did not the mind first conceive, no action at all would follow, and where it conceives erroneously, ill effects result: secondly, therefore, when knowledge begins to enlighten mankind, and science, as now, to put power into their hands, by enabling them to lay hold, as it were, on the elements,—to use, and in some degree, command them,—it is of vital importance that the directing mind should be enlarged with that increase of power. It would be dreadful, indeed, if the power were increased, but the mind not at the

same time improved to use that power well ; and many do, on this account, fear a new discovery : they think if the power of man be thus augmented, it will be dangerous and pernicious, by his abuse of it. This, however, is a mistake : in fact, the fear of remaining ignorance ; all knowledge, all the discoveries of science, have in themselves a tendency to improve the mind, giving it knowledge, as they invariably improve the condition of man when brought into practical action. But why should not science and knowledge receive the advantages they give ? Why, while they enlighten and enlarge the mind, should not the mind give freedom and full strength to them ? We still enthrall the mind itself. We approve of research into scientific and learned pursuits, but we forbid the mind to use its faculties equally on moral questions : by this its native powers are fettered and kept dormant, and great impediments are thereby raised to science itself. The whole mind is weakened, if due exercise be denied on any part to the use of its faculties ; as if one member be crippled, the whole body is thereby distorted, and the subject becomes a deformed person : thus it is, in perverting the mind on one point, the whole becomes a maimed existence. If a man be blind, he may do much – do wonders ; but they are wonders for *him* to do, and only what you expect from the man with his eyes, who is another being. Would you call that man free who was permitted to rove in a garden or extensive parks, but never suffered to go out into the grand plan of Nature herself ? What he sees might be fair and well ordered, but how much nobler and better is there that he has lost unseen ! Thus it is, if we allow

freedom only in part; the mind may see some good, some beauty, but will form the most absurd conceptions, whether for good or evil, of all beyond its barrier, and never can be great or vigorous without the ample range nature provided for it, and fitted it to take.

I allude, I confess, to religion, that most important point; for while it is allowed to be meritorious for the mind to seek for truths, and exert all its faculties in scientific discoveries, it ever has been, and still is, made a crime even to suppose, far less to seek, anything new—anything further—in religious inquiry; and that, perhaps, is the cause why our improvement in morals falls so far short of our advances in knowledge and the conveniences of life. This narrow and pernicious persuasion absolutely prevents men from moral improvement; it divides religion from all other kinds of knowledge, and makes it different to them; whereas *all* knowledge is connected, and all sorts of it to be worked out by the same means. What are those means? To find the truths of any science, we must *search* into it, reason upon it, and compare it with the other manifestations of nature; then build our conclusions: in religion we must do just the same. Infinity and eternity are the province of religion; we can only morally enter there: *they* have no limits. How, then, is it possible she can range where there are no bounds, and *not* make further discoveries, if we only allow her to range? When, then, this last, this greatest bar is once opened, what impediment remains to inquiry of any sort? for none other is it deemed wrong, or sacrilegious, to enter upon. This once made free, with what cheerfulness

will the human mind expand upon a subject so important and delightful!—for what can be more inspiring to mortals subject to decay and death, than *Futurity*, where only they can hope restoration and advancement? When ignorance was general, we all know it was made a crime to make any further discovery, or propose any new theory, even in science; and the most meritorious characters have been shamefully treated, reviled, and persecuted, for doing that for which in after ages they have been justly ranked among the greatest benefactors of mankind. Truth has, at last, so far prevailed, that to search into natural appearances and open scientific truths is acknowledged good, and freedom allowed to the pursuit; but still this prejudice clings fast to moral truth—to religion! Still it is a crime, a condemning sin, to fancy any advance can be made, or offer any new thought there; and what is this but ignorance defending her last stronghold? Would any one say of the sciences,—We have got thus far in astronomy, or geology,—here let us stop; we have found wonders, and will go no further. I fear, indeed, many would; but they are those who from fear or interest *want* to put a stop to it. Many find science and religion at variance, and secretly think they owe it to the last to discourage the first; they cannot deny demonstrated facts, but they are averse to receive themselves, and, as much as they can, check others: this is hurtful to science, and worse to religion. It is because they inquire only on one side. Was as free investigation granted on the other, it would, and *will* be found, science is the best supporter of real religion. In science, those who are at work upon it,

and those who really love the cause, they plainly perceive, however some may retard, that one wonder discovered is but the evidence of more: that one truth opens another truth, and the means they have found, like the truths they find, enable them to acquire further means to bring out yet greater truths. This holds as good in moral truth. Why, then, do we withhold the search of more knowledge in religion? Why do we imagine it so barren as to be able to open no fresh springs to our thirst? Why should we stand still in religion any more than in anything else? Nay, we *cannot* in anything stand still; and if we do not advance, we must go back. Were we to stop further inquiry in science, we should soon inevitably recur to ignorance; and the state of our general morals, I think, too plainly testifies the want of progress in religion: we advance but little that way; and in theory many absurd, many demoralizing tenets are entertained by various parties: assumption marks some, and extravagant fanaticism others, and even gross superstition still prevails. It is evidently high time for some improvement to be attained. And how is this to be done? By the same means we use in science—by *seeking*. The truths of science cannot be discovered nor brought to bear but by research; neither can those of religion. Virtue suffers by forbidding search in religion, because there can be no knowledge in any matter without search; and when we know a thing only a little way, or not rightly, we see it not all, nor its best parts: we see not the reasons that make it good to ourselves, nor the magnitude of its results; consequently we want the most powerful motives and inducements to bring us to act

on it, in wanting the conviction that knowledge affords. Nay, want of knowledge so perverts the mind as to make it hold wrong for right, and consider crime a duty. It is not so many years since a heretic, burnt at the stake, would afford in Spain a gratifying spectacle to the eyes, not only of men, but women ; and what was this but thinking wrong in religion ? They were not otherwise more cruel than other people ; but they thought they pleased Heaven, and did God service. The other nations, when in their state, did the same. But surely that it is a crime in itself, and the error lies in those who take the life, or torture a fellow being for thinking differently to themselves in religion—even though his sentiments were mistaken or wrong—a small advance in religious knowledge will show ; and we ourselves condemn the actions we once performed.

I make these instances only to show how necessary it is to think *right* in religion, and hence infer the expediency of seeking knowledge in it, without which we cannot think right. For myself, I have long and most earnestly employed my mind on the search of truth in religion. It is not for me to say I have found it, far less to deny it to any other party, yet I will own that it appears to me that in that search my mind had conceived some new ideas, and in the system I proceeded to build upon them I had opened some truths : if I did not hope this, I should have no right to trouble the public. I think it, because it seems to me the theories I deduce correspond with the evidences of Nature, account for her general laws, and gain corroboration from the facts of science ; it is, therefore, to the scientific I

chiefly look to confirm or disprove what I advance. Science I esteem as the touchstone of truth, for it alone is capable of bringing out, in more or less degree, demonstration upon the subjects it tries. And what I am anxious to see is, whether the theories I propose will be established by science ; for if a theory on being proposed is first weighed by reason, and found consistent in its principles *with* reason ; if, then, when tested by science, it is borne out by scientific facts, and proves to answer to the rest of Nature and her steadfast laws ; if, finally, its practical results agree with, and promote the exercise of virtue—it has all the evidence any matter can have : it is the truth !

But though to science I appeal, I equally invite *all* to judge. I have not myself built these my views in religion *on* science, but having conceived them, I found they agreed *with* science. Religion is meant for *all*, what all have an equal right to, as all have an equal concern in, and ought to assert that right by judging for themselves. All who have reason can judge of truth when set before them, *if they use their reason*. Truth is elicited by the collision of mind with mind ; so only can its light be struck out. I am therefore most desirous to lay my ideas and system before the world at large, to be judged by all ; for what better, what other way to impart the benefit to others, if I *have* found any truth ; for if it be truth, it must produce benefit ; if I am wrong, or mistaken, to be myself set right, as I seek the truth only, and am as willing to accept it found by another as sincere in searching for it myself.

That I am right, in attempting the discovery of

further truth in religion and seeking truth only, indifferent to what side it be on, I have the authority of Locke, established as one of the deepest reasoners of any age or country—whom the thinking, the moral, and the religious are equally proud to call their own, as he was alike eminent for reason, morality, and religion. I shall, therefore, as so many are still too prone to condemn researches of this nature altogether, transcribe a few passages from him, of the many in which he exhorts men to *use* their reason, shows them it *is sufficient* if they do, and that it is their *not* using it makes the difficulties they complain of.

“We fail our faculties,” says he, “a great deal more than they fail us. It is mismanagement more than want of abilities that men have reason to complain of, and which they actually do complain of, in those who differ from them.” This is an ennobling consideration in respect to the mind itself, and should arouse it to exercise its powers, as it reflects the greatest discredit on the numbers who thus voluntarily degrade their moral nature by abjectly giving up their minds to the dictation of others, and on those who from interested motives pervert their own judgments from considerations of truth, and make it their study to pervert others also.

Locke says again: “Reason *seldom* or *never* deceives those who trust to her.” Is this not true? *Must* it not be so? For were it otherwise, had not God made man’s reason sufficient for him, he could not be a reasonable, nor, consequently, an accountable being. We are fond of complaining of the weakness of human reason; some are so deplorable

as to imagine it religious so to do. I doubt, if this were sifted to the bottom, it would be found a mere excuse to cover our own failings. The weakness lies in ourselves, in not using reason. We seldom go on with her far, or long ; passions, interest, or idleness warp our wishes ; we cease to judge by, or act with, her, and declining from her, seek to vindicate ourselves under the plea she is too weak to carry us further. Locke is aware of this, and of the consequences that are too often visited on those who dare to use reason in any way that innovates on old customs or opinions, particularly in religion. He asks, " Who is there who is hardy enough to contend with the reproach which is everywhere prepared for those who dare venture to dissent from the received opinions of their country or party ? And where is the man to be found who can patiently bear the names of whimsical, sceptical, or atheist, which he is sure to meet who does in the least degree scruple any of the common opinions ? " Yet he goes on to show those opinions often have no better original than the superstition of a nurse, or the authority of an old woman grown up into the dignity of religious principles. He says again : " There are great numbers of opinions which, by men of different countries, education, and tempers, are received and embraced as first and unquestionable principles, many whereof, both for their absurdity as well as opposition one to another, it is impossible should be true, but yet all these propositions, how remote soever from reason, are so sacred somewhere or other, that men, even of good understanding in other matters, will sooner part with their

lives and whatever is dearest to them, than suffer themselves to doubt, or others to question, the truth of them." We all can see this is a fact in other sects.

That religious truths must, to be found, be sought in the same spirit as any other truths, he as clearly evinces and maintains. He says—"The world is apt to cast great blame on those who have an indifference for opinions, particularly religious ones. I fear this is the foundation of great error and worse consequences. To be indifferent which of two opinions is true is the right temper of mind that preserves it from being imposed upon, and disposes it to examine with that indifference until it has done its best to find the truth, and this is the only safe and direct way to it."

One more appeal, which applies with equal force to those who seek to discover truth, and those who examine the researches made.

"Many men," continues he, "firmly embrace falsehood for truth, not only because they never thought otherwise, but also thus blinded as they have been from the beginning, they never could think otherwise—at least, without a vigour of mind able to contest the empire of habit, and look into its own principles—a freedom few men have a notion of in themselves, and fewer are allowed the practice of by others; it being the great art and business of teachers and guides in most sects, to *suppress* as much as they can this fundamental duty, which every man owes himself, and is the first steady step towards right and truth in the whole train of his actions and opinions. This would give one reason to suspect that such teachers are conscious to them-

selves of falsehood or weakness in the tenets they profess, since they will not suffer the grounds whereon they are built to be examined, when as those who seek truth only and desire to own and propagate nothing else, freely expose their principles to the test, and are pleased to have them examined, give men leave to reject them if they can ; and if there be anything in them weak or unsound, are willing to have it detected, that they themselves, as well as others, may not lay stress upon any received proposition beyond what the evidence of its truth will warrant and allow."

I shall conclude this introduction by representing that religion is not a cold or uninteresting inquiry. That we find it, or make it so, proceeds from that want of research into it which I complain of, which allows us not to survey all its stores. It is not uninteresting in itself, assuredly. Doth it not contain *hope*? doth it not contain *futurity*? What more sweet to us than the one? what more important than the other? Man must have a religion ; right or wrong, he cannot do without religion. He who has once possessed that gift—that greatest gift—of life, yet finds he lives to decay and die, what can he do, what remains for him, but to look for the possibility of the continuance of that life on which all the goods he has, or can have, depend? His very love of pleasure, his very wishes for enjoyment, serve to stimulate stronger the love of life—that life which is the foundation on which his all must be built, yet which he knows he must here so soon resign : carried away by the waves of death into an unknown ocean, he still clings to the plank of hope to save life—the hope of

living again. But *where?* and *how?* These are the questions he must earnestly desire to know, and anxiously agitate. He feels the difference between his soul and body ; he sees the evidences of God in all nature, and these evidences tell him He is both great and good. He knows the difference between vice and virtue ; his understanding can perceive it, and the effects of either teach him ; he comes to the conviction that to please God, and gain his favour in futurity, the practice of virtue now are the only means, and the punishment of the contrary conduct, vice, follows as a consequence : by these his hopes and fears are actuated on their proper objects, and tend to produce good as their results. These are the broad, natural foundations of religion ; they cannot be destroyed ; but ignorance and interest may and have raised upon it the human structures of superstition and error, which have from the earliest ages not only turned men from the truth, but by bringing them to false notions and conclusions, occasioned not only great errors, but great vices among them.

It is, then, of the utmost importance to take right views in religion ; and the larger and clearer the views we take, the better and happier we shall be. Much that is delightful is lost by keeping our views confined. What can be more animating than standing on an eminence, and looking over a fine prospect, particularly if our road lies there ? So we stand in regard to futurity. It is sad, and a strange narrowness, that we dare not attempt more discovery in a journey we know we must take : nor does it seem very wise ; and I must think far grander views, and more aspiring hopes lie before us, if we allowed

ourselves the freedom to look at and enter upon them.

Nor is this mere speculation. Futurity is not confined to itself, to hereafter ; *it grows out of the present*. We may not say, at least with impunity, for we often do—"This is to come, and what it will be is little matter to us now." As our ideas of futurity are just, and our hopes in it strong, so will our practice of virtue be, to win its rewards or avoid its retributive justice; we know that by present virtue only can we gain the one or avoid the other. What promotes virtue, promotes our peace and happiness here as much as it assures it hereafter. This connexion is to be found through all the ordinations and plans of God, though we are very apt to overlook it; no part is divided from the other, not the greatest from the least. The present is influenced by futurity, as much as the eternity and infinity of futurity will be influenced by the present. Virtue is the means to gain futurity's rewards, but knowledge is the eye by which futurity, its rewards, and even virtue, are seen. Let us then seek knowledge.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

PRINCIPLES.

I SHALL first lay down my principles on which I mean to build, then offer my system ; after that, proceed to show that it can (as I think) fully and satisfactorily account for all we have hitherto held as mysteries in the moral and physical world, and the state of man in both ; lastly, that the same system may be traced to go on into, and therefore can carry us far and cheerfully into the haven of the world we look to enter of another life. I shall begin with *Creation*, and end with *Futurity*. The intermediate space I shall fill with the trial of the great questions which have ever, as yet, agitated mankind—as why man was placed on this earth—what his future destination—his present state—why evil, wrong, pain, and death are permitted in the creation—and enter into an investigation on the nature of God himself. These questions, great as they are, I venture to hope I may throw some new lights on, which may serve to clear them from the darkness in which men have so long held them to be involved beyond remedy ; for I think that darkness has been of their own making

in not sufficiently using their reason to find them out.

To account for this, I can only say, that simple truths are the last found out. But when a truth *is* once found, it can never change: we have sure ground to conduct us on our way. We may discover much *more* of it, greater parts, but all additions and increase serve only to confirm the first system, if true. For example, the Copernican system in astronomy: immense improvements have been made, and more extensive views obtained since he first conceived it; but all these *confirm*, not lessen, that he had opened the true system.

My principles are,—first, that “there are no mysteries in the moral or physical world.” Wonders there are—surpassing wonders; but a wonder and a mystery are very different things. A mystery is a thing, or question, that never can be explained or comprehended. Men like to fancy these exist, both in nature and religion, and make a merit of believing what they cannot understand, though the merit would lie in trying to understand it. A wonder is a thing that at first appears beyond our conception, because it is certain *we* could never have done anything like it. All nature is this; her mechanism of the whole world, and all that is in it—from man himself to a leaf on the tree, or an insect that inhabits it—is all most wonderful. But this wonderful is produced by the admirable execution of the mechanism, and its exact adaptation to its design. In a mystery, the *design* can never be made out, and the fabric is such that, but for some fancied necessity to believe it, all would pronounce it absurd instead of

well contrived. To say a thing is so vast we cannot take in the *whole* of it, shows its greatness ; to say it is so mysterious we cannot comprehend it at all, makes it little and of no good to us. All that we *do* see of a wonder we can understand, and the more we look into it, the *more* we understand it ; of a mystery, it is the reverse : the more we agitate it, the more we are perplexed. One invites research ; the other forbids it. To use that research in one is owned a merit, in the other deemed a crime, and by this criterion you may know them. Whatever draws back from inquiry is not true ; for investigation is what truth wants, as so only she can prove her reality. A wonder never involves a contradiction, which a mystery always does. In short, wonders are made by God, mysteries by man.

This brings me to my second principle—that *reason can, by observation on nature, and full use of its powers, find out all—all* questions in the moral world—*all* wonders in the physical world. This will be denied by many, doubted by most, I know. But consider,—what has God given reason *for*? and when one truth is gained, what remains but to go on to more? Look back to man in a state of savage ignorance, then compute what we have now arrived at—the discovery of the solar system, the laws of gravity, and electricity—the invention of the telescope—the art of navigation, of printing, of steam—these few grand heads, besides the numbers of great and useful ones, in all the departments of science and social life; and will not these teach us, that if so much has already been gained, it is positive evidence that all other wonders—those which we at

present only know to exist, but have found as yet no clue to explain—are as likely to be eventually discovered as those that went before them? Nay, more: there is not a greater disparity between them, and one truth opens and helps another. Minds arise at stated periods: one conceives a new truth, and opens a system; others follow on the discovered path, till it is worked out into practical utility. We should, therefore, never use such words (for we should not so think) as—"This can never be understood;" "that we must not hope to find out;" "here we must stop, and attempt to penetrate no further;" or even, "we must only adore." We never can adore in ignorance as we can in knowledge, for in the first we cannot know the worth of the object, in the last we do. We must say, "This has not yet been found out;" "the cause of that has not as yet been ascertained;" "for such or such a discovery we must look for some future genius to unfold, and our posterity to enjoy the benefit of." Nor is there any reason to fear that in the moral or physical world will remain for ever any truth unknown; on the contrary, there is more than hope, there is evidence, by what has been effected, of what can be done; for if so much has been worked out through all the darkness, difficulties, and even dangers of ignorance, with which we have as yet had to struggle, what may we not anticipate now that the shades of ignorance begin to be driven from the earth before the dawning light of knowledge, when men are free to pursue investigation, without fear or reproach, and assisted by the lights of those truths gained already.

This carries me further to another point, which

accounts for much that exists in our condition at the present epoch of time ; and I must insist man is still but just emerging from the childhood of knowledge—I had almost said infancy ; but its infancy may, perhaps, be justly placed in those ages when knowledge lay struggling in its cradle, veiled round with the darkness of ignorance, and swathed with the bandages of superstition, which would not allow the new-born being free growth, and healthful action. Wisdom was then confined to the thought of a few superior minds who arose at intervals, conceived some grand truths, and endeavoured to teach them ; but the mass of mankind being wholly ignorant—nay, worse than ignorant, perverted, as it must be, for that stage of mental babyhood, though it (in itself) presents the mind ready, and the soil fit for the seeds of true knowledge, yet that state of weakness makes it at the same time obnoxious to craft, or power to seize and use it for their own purposes ; and error and interest have ever stepped in to envelop the young mind in all the clouds of superstition and heathenism, which not only debar it from the light of truth, but raise a thousand phantoms of their own to mislead and deceive it. No wonder, then, if the teachers of truth made slow progress with others, while they themselves could not avoid partaking largely of the general errors, being like the rest born in that darkness, and having to grope their way out as they could, with little learning and no science to assist them. But the great misfortune was, that they endeavoured to build theories of their own ; they begun in their own minds. Perhaps it is natural for man so to do, and I think superstition is the great

cause and promoter of this mistake at the beginning, in making men believe that religion was already made known to them, and they must take their gods as they are offered to them by those who have pretended to be these gods' delegates, or be guilty of impiety. It is this, perhaps, that has been also the original cause of dividing religion from all else that is good, from good feelings, from honour—even from good principles, even from virtue, and thus we find such numbers who arrogate to themselves a superior share of religion, miserably failing in these qualities, without which religion is an empty boast. To endeavour to raise religion at the expense of good feelings is reversing the foundation above the superstructure, which therefore can never stand. You poorly think (or rather persuade yourself) that you are doing God honour by this: it is to be feared such arguers feel a deficiency in their practice of these qualities, which is not such an easy task, and so endeavour to hide it under the assumed possession of something better; for what is this affected assertion of God's honour but setting your work above his own? for he has made our nature capable of good feeling, but our own work must make us religious; and it is nonsense to talk of our being able to be religious, if we were not first capable of good feelings. And therefore we may add, that the breast that is devoid of a sense of honour is not sufficient for true religion, and I doubt we shall ever find such fall disappointingly short where we expect most from them. As for virtue and good principles, what are these but the practical part of religion, without which no man, whatever be his faith, can be worthy or deserve the

rewards of religion? Being on religion, I mention this division of it from the essential virtues of our character, which I consider one of the most pernicious mistakes, and fatally detrimental to the practical part of religion as well as right opinions of it. But to return to my more immediate subject.

Had men, from the first, instead of building theories of their own to make out what they thought at first sight mysterious in nature, which is always explaining a mystery *by* a mystery,—had they gone at once to nature herself, and by using their reason on her evidences, sought to *see*, instead of *make*, the causes why things were so, I am well convinced they would, even soon, have found out many, or all of the truths that explain those questions which they still hold as insolvable mysteries. But this, in religion has never yet been done. I suppose it is one of the natural effects of ignorance; for I must return to my point that we are, even now, only in the childhood of knowledge. It is not very long since research into nature for scientific truths was opposed, and called irreligious—nay, those who dared it persecuted on those grounds. Steam and railroads, which are now in daily use, many at their first introduction thought power too great for man to exercise; and even at the present moment very many think if locomotion by balloons could be effected, the effects would be terrible to the human race, as the attempt is impious—as if anything man could gain could be otherwise than good for him! These things show that we are still under the childish fears of ignorance. Everything goes by comparison. We are great to what we were; so, perhaps, apt to think ourselves greater than

we are. But there *is* a great difference between the stages of infancy and childhood ; we have got to that. Research is not now condemned, but approved in science. Liberty of conscience is allowed. These are important advances : we have got, as it were, ground to stand and fight upon ; for still religion, at least, has much to contend for. In science, men are allowed to think as they judge conclusive ; but this, even *thinking* for themselves is but just—nay, only as far as they cannot help, granted in religion. In science, its votaries are permitted free research ; this is forbidden to religion. But why has science so far outstripped religion, both in mental discovery and practical results ? Is it not because the one is allowed that liberty of research which the other is denied ? You will say, perhaps, men are cold, generally, to the concerns of religion. They may, and so are they, *generally*, to the concerns of science, yet you see what progress science has made, merely because no restraint has been laid upon those inclined to turn their thoughts to it ; and now almost all are beginning to partake the feeling, and share in some knowledge of it. So it would be in religion ; and I feel sure one cause why men are so cold in religion proceeds from this want of research. Many certainly would not enter upon it. That is never the case in anything ; but the few who do (whatever be the subject), lay it open to others, and they are willing to enjoy the fruits if they see them good. Religion is, in itself, of vital importance to man, as influencing his present conduct, and of deepest interest, as involving his future destiny ; and would you allow him by investigation to find all the extent of these

obligations, and add the delightful hopes which are lost by forbidding the search for *more*, I fully anticipate you would no longer have to complain of his coldness individually ; while the effects these convictions could not fail to carry into his conduct would be equally happy to society.

Mankind certainly, even now, are in the merest childhood of knowledge as to religion, and there is no way of growing out of it but by research. The common people of all, even European, countries are still grossly superstitious ; and even among the classes who are well educated, one hears such narrow and bigoted sentiments as disgrace reason, show, indeed, that they never have used reason in religion ; and this because men have taken upon them to declare you neither must nor can go any further. But can the justice, the sacred right of liberty, moral as well as personal, be so indisputably shown as when I advance, *even heaven uses not force?* No ; and to make a God a being who rules by arbitrary sway is degrading even to him. The master who acts by compulsion vilifies himself as much as his slave : the nature of the slave is degraded by receiving the wrong ; his own becomes as bad, or worse, by committing it. *Does God thus deal with man?* We *know* he does not. Physically, and morally, he leaves him by nature free. He leaves him to all the dangers and errors that spring from a state of weakness and ignorance, rather than debase the very nature of his creature and abuse his own power by using *force*. He forces him not even to virtue ; he allows him even the power to do ill, or else that freedom would be no freedom. Good

and ill are set before him : the means are given him, but he must work these means himself. Bounteous as nature is, he must till, and sow before he reaps her fruits. Clear as truth is, he must search, and use his reason to open her prospects. By what pretence, then, can man assume—by what meanness allow to be assumed over him by mortals like himself, a domination that Heaven takes not, a coercion of those just rights of using his own reason for himself, and uttering his opinions thereupon, which form the basis of all the dignity of his nature, and that God himself respects ? And as man has not arrived at personal freedom, nor taken that stand in the creation that he is able to do, and meant for, while he lives in a state in which his property may be invaded with impunity, his choice of action constrained, or his labour extorted while he himself reaps not the fruit of it ; so neither has he morally, while the slightest restriction is put upon his *thinking*, or the least opposition made to the utterance of his thoughts It is no matter that those thoughts may be erroneous. Where there is freedom, and people are not obliged to receive opinions, error cannot be long-lived ; truth must prevail, when not kept down and concealed. Even if any wrong thinkers did, this way, some mischief, it is an evanescent casualty, not to compare with the fatal, lasting consequences of constraint on liberty of conscience, which attacks the very foundation and strikes at the root of truth and virtue. Nor is it enough to secure liberty of conscience to say, no man is *persecuted* for thinking as he will. It is of small use to think, if utterance bring not into practice. Thought may be

compared to a tree, which till speech be grafted on it, can bear no fruit. You may make pretext of confining error, but you are in reality confining truth. Recal the mischief, retarding to the whole of mankind, irreparable to the individual, that has been occasioned by this assumption. There is scarce one great truth in the moral world, or discovery in the physical, that has not been persecuted and raved at as error, and even blasphemy, by the men of its own times. This is a known fact, known by *practice*. Why, then, continue a criterion that such long and repeated proof has demonstrated the weakness and fallacy of? Who can say who is the man that has hit upon a truth? Let every man have freedom himself, and give it to others; so ultimately truth at last *must* be found. That pretence of giving error licence is either selfish interest or stupid fear. Real truth never dreads any investigation: she wishes it, for only so can she establish herself; and what cannot stand that ordeal is *not* truth. If men would judge by the reason of a thing in itself, and not by their own preconceived opinions and interest, the truth would soon be found, for there is no darkness in her—that we see her not clearly proceeds only from the mists those prejudices and interests have raised before our eyes. But there is one plain rule which men of all persuasions may safely and surely go by, if they would use it. When any new sect or system propose themselves, sift them by the sieve of virtue: if they contain anything contrary to the practice of good and pure morals, they are false and destructive. On them there can be no question, and even an attempt to make questions upon them should

at once be reprobated. But as for doctrines, systems, and opinions, these, however much they may startle—(and they are what men soonest startle at, like children, frightened at ghosts, ideal beings, beyond an attack on real substance, which morals may be said to be, as they personally affect us)—these, I say, should never be turned from, run down, or taken in aversion, merely because they are new. If any tenet or proposition be more than we have been taught, or different from what we have been used to, we are immediately alarmed, when on that very account it demands our attention. We may be alarmed only because the truth is great. To *be* a new truth, it must necessarily shock some old prejudice or interest. Should the propositions be folly, or even of bad tendency, they cannot last long while no restriction is laid on endeavours for truth, and men are still very far from the state of intelligence they ought to be in, while they fear any danger from this moral freedom, or permit restraint to it—while they are frightened at anything new advanced, and cannot examine and judge it: discard it, if idle and fallacious; support it, if good and promising. If men are so weak as to be so easily led away and imposed on by falsehood, so soon alarmed and put on opposition to truth, think you, indulgence in this is the way to cure them? No; it is a sign they are still narrow and bigoted in their ideas and views, and the only means to get the better of it is to open and clear the course for the progress of truth. But liberty cannot be granted only to *some*, for moral or personal liberty confined to individuals, creates the most galling yoke on the rest, who must then go by their will; and

though they be very few who really discover new truths, who can say who that one will be? Besides that, liberty is equally the right of all. This freedom makes not the danger, but the safety; like the pure winds of heaven, dispersing what is close and noxious, and bringing with it health and vigour to enjoy its own vital benefits. It gives ease and assurance to the *one* who finds the truth, when he may offer it without persecution or reproach; it renders the many what they ought to be—able to reject what is bad, and accept what is good. To hold man chained to a certain set of opinions, be they what they may, without allowing him to hear, look at, and examine others, for fear of endangering those you have given him, or expose him to what you call hurtful, is treating him as a child, who can know neither good nor evil but as you point them out to him, with this difference—that in one, childhood, he is permitted at a certain age to throw off his leading-strings; in the other, he is to be held in them his whole life. And, to carry on this simile of childhood, as it is, after all, found, those children walk most surely, seldom fall, and rarely, even in perilous circumstances, harm themselves, who have learned to rise and walk by their own efforts. Much more is this the case with man in his mental capability: deny him the free use of his reason, and he will always be weak and ignorant, and, what is worse, with the follies and vices weakness and ignorance induce and lay him open to. To think of making man good by holding him carefully from whatever you conceive may hurt him, is not only supposing him a being every way poorer than he is, but keep-

ing him so. It is like another false system of bringing up children, swathing them—shutting them up from air and exercise, for fear they should catch cold or injure themselves—at once spoiling and coercing them. What do they grow up? More obnoxious to harm, tender, timid, enervate both in body and mind. As fallacious in principle, as evil in effect, it is to think of withholding men from moral ill by restraining the freedom of thought and expression; as debased and unhealthy will it make their tone of mind. Men ought to be—and they can be—capable for themselves of judging of good and evil; then of choosing the one, and refusing the other. If they were not able to do the first, they would not be reasonable beings; till they do the last, they certainly are not virtuous ones; for as there is no virtue in being restrained by compulsion from evil, neither can there be any in being forced to good—it neither finds nor works any merit in him. The endeavour rather sets the will towards opposition, lessens the sense of free agency, and consequently the effort to work good for himself, all of which produces effects of incalculable mischief both to the individual and society.

Free agency, and (resulting therefrom) the necessity of man's working for himself, that he is a *free agent* and a *working agent*, forms the last principle my system requires me to lay down. That man is possessed of free will, will be generally admitted; if he were not, he would not be a responsible, accountable being, and there would be neither vice nor virtue, or good or evil, benefit or blame, in them or him. We can all *feel* this freedom of will within us,

and it is this that makes him amenable to reward and punishment, as he uses or abuses that freedom. But man is, therefore, a *working* agent: he is not absolutely *forced* to work, but he must work or have nothing; and a being with capabilities to enjoy chooses to work, to have. Placed here, free to think and act, what can he do but begin to shift for himself? Yet he is too weak a being, too much in the state of childhood, to be trusted with *perfect freedom*; even the mind itself cannot *help* some thinking from the impression of the objects conveyed to it by the senses; but while the choice is not constrained, the freedom of the will is untouched in its integrity, and man's responsibility unimpaired. The wants of the body are still more pressing; hence (and also from being pleasurable) they first engage his attention. It was necessary to impel him strongly to action—he must work or starve; though even there we may say, he *might* starve himself if he would; not that there is any danger of his making that choice. He never would act at all, if even necessaries were provided for him ready to his hands; it is clear, therefore, he is meant to work; work is provided for him. In savage life, where the wants are few, man is very idle; still he must hunt for his food, and exert himself to carry on his wars and plans, such as they are. In civilized society, man has many more motives to stimulate him to action, and that state affords many more objects to work for, and therefore many more modes of working; but be it fortune, wisdom, learning, glory, whatever it be, still we must work for it, and work well too. We see the evidence of this in looking back to the past—we feel it in acting in the

present. When we survey the great achievements and grand ruins of bygone ages, the pyramids, the temples, the aqueducts, the remains of cities, the tamed horse, the elephant brought to serve, the plough, the ship, the cultivation of nature, and the acquisition of luxuries ; when we contemplate our present state—the commerce, the riches, the comforts, the conveniences of daily life, the wonders of navigation, steam, railroad, and all that is done by printing and manufacture ; then, when we turn to what has been effected in the moral world—the conceptions, the efforts after truth ; the theories, the inventions, the real discoveries—all that has actually been ascertained in astronomy, in arithmetic, chemistry, geology, all the arts and sciences, painting, music, &c.,—who has done all this work but man ? We know it is all his work, and we know that to advance what he has, and even to keep it, he must work on as he does, and now with a great increase of power. It is indisputable he is a working agent, and as plain, he was meant to be one. All he has gained in everything has been by his own work ; all he would or can gain must be by his own work still.

On these principles I shall proceed : they are what exist. My system will more fully bring them out, while their existence will prove my system.

CHAPTER II.

CREATION.

LET us begin with creation. It will be asked by very many—What can we add to our knowledge of creation by reason, since man was not placed upon this earth until after it was formed for him—saw not its beginning, nor knew its end? I answer, a great deal. This is the hasty conclusion that precedes the research it ought to follow. By that rule, we should know nothing of God. But we do; by what we see—by his works. Do not these testify of Him, and in the strongest manner? They do; and had men but given their observation to nature, they would have found the knowledge they are even now complaining of the want of. Why cannot man have some knowledge of creation while he is placed in the midst of creation? If any one were transported in his sleep into a far-distant country, which he had never seen or heard of before, the first things he would naturally do on awaking, would be to ask—How came I here? and to examine his new place of abode. Now this is the actual state of man on this globe: he finds himself on it, he knows not originally

how or why ; but he has put a self-made veto on the inquiry, on the assumption that it is impossible he ever can in any part elucidate the matter ; and without inquiry he certainly never can. Suppose a man who had a turn for mechanism had a watch put into his hands to look at—he would attentively consider it, endeavour to open it, then by taking it to pieces obtain the knowledge of its structure. Now this is, again, the state of man : he is placed amidst a fabric of the most wonderful construction ; Nature has given him a turn to inquire and examine, as she has endowed him with a capacity to compass knowledge, which in this case has been held in abeyance by the persuasion he ought not to seek it, and could not obtain it. Science, however, is just opening new views, which will give us new lights upon the subject. These lights, however, have been gained entirely by Science seeking for herself ; but, as is the nature of light, will equally illumine every object brought within its rays. *Geology* is developing new discoveries, new wonders, new facts concerning this our earth, on which we live, that result in new conclusions and lead to new ideas. These geological truths and deductions seem to me to reflect great strength and confirmation upon my system in the moral world which I am about to propose ; and I most earnestly wish and invite the attention of the geologists to support me if they find it agree with their discoveries—undeceive me, if I am mistaken in supposing it so to do. Let me hope to gain this degree of consideration, though unknown. Science should ever be willing to pay it to every endeavour after truth ; and the noblest end of science is by

opening men's eyes by knowledge to strengthen them to the light of moral truth.

One would naturally imagine man would first examine the things nearest to him, and go on from them to those more distant. Experience, however, proves the contrary to be the case. Astronomy is the oldest, geology the youngest of the sciences. Man at a very early date obtained considerable knowledge of the heavenly bodies so far separated from him ; but even his examination of the globe on which he lives and moves is but now begun. Geology has opened such new facts, and consequent theories, that reason cannot help expanding with them, and taking new views. Geology is discovering clues that lead us to ascertain the age of the earth ; this leads on to how long man has possessed it; here are the first steps of knowledge towards *when* man began to inhabit it ! And these can lead on to more. Geology proceeds to find that great parts of our terrestrial abode, now dry, were once covered with water, with other mighty changes and workings of nature ; she has some demonstration of enormous animals of species now extinct and unknown to us, that altogether form the new conclusion that great revolutions of nature took place, and this earth was inhabited by those creatures before it became the abode of man. All this will be found presently to bear strongly for my system. It would be both pleasing and interesting to inquire, and endeavour by degrees to trace, the entrance of man upon this earthly scene, and its preparation for him. It would be pleasing in speculation, and if speculation wander not beyond the sight of science, which should be its guide, as useful : the mind must begin. It is

the idea such and such things are, puts us upon finding out what is. But on the speculative part I shall enter very little, not beyond a few ideas that the survey of the case suggests—that seem as probabilities—are sustained by some evidence from facts, or merely what may or may not be to be decided when tested. My province in this part is, as it were, to open doors; to show to men the stores Nature contains, which they have not yet freely explored; to urge them to enter and find what those riches are; to take them, and enrich themselves. Knowledge is power. The riches of knowledge are the only riches which, advantageous to the individual, tend to equalize all. Knowledge, to be permanent, to be useful, to be effective, must be general.

After, then, a very few speculative ideas as to what man's state might be, first placed upon this earth—there are some that I might advance possessing even some demonstrative force, but I shall confine myself here to such as bear immediately upon a deduction I am going to make from one of my principles—that man is a working agent in everything, moral and physical. I deduce from this, first, that man began here in a state of complete ignorance, and bring forward the facts that substantiate it; second, that it was necessary he *should* so be: nor is this a cruel or sad necessity, but just and kind.

The nearest we can *see* of man in a state of nature is the savage state, of which the American Indians afford us still abundant specimens—without arts, without letters, without civilization; yet they understand the use of arms, the making of the simple implements they want, observe certain rules (*laws*)

of their own, and recount traditions of long periods past. We must suppose a state anterior to this. On this we must use speculation, yet speculation from what we see remaining. Let us image man *first* placed on this earth, possessing nothing, capable of everything—what a noble being!

As noble is the work he has to perform. He is totally naked; without knowledge, for he has as yet *learned* nothing; without possessions, for he has as yet *gained* nothing; without virtue, for he has as yet *done* nothing—but all before him, all to be gained, and he with the powers to gain them all!

He knows not in such a state as much as this—even this is to be learned; and he needs the stimulus of immediate want to push him on to seek to satisfy his first corporal necessities: with these he begins, and this accounts why man is still so much further advanced in his physical than moral condition.

The necessity laid upon man to work, itself proves he began in a state of ignorance; if he already knew, he would not seek knowledge. What need of it? If he begins at all, he must, in justice, begin at the lowest step; his privilege consists in being able to ascend. As man, individually, has his state of infancy, growth, manhood, so he has corresponding collectively, with perhaps this difference, that in the last, the collective, he will not be subject to decay, but increase. In the *infancy* of his state, then, collectively, he might be as much an infant as when first born individually; he might not even have speech. Fire has been held to be an invention of man, and language has been held an invention of man; many, however, will cry out upon these two

being ascribed to him, though we all own him to be the author of writing and numbers. If it be thought *cruel* he should be without language, or not possible he could *do* without it, these are pretty evidently mistaken fancies ; he would, even then, be neither an unhappy nor helpless being. We think not the brutes unhappy ; we *know* them not helpless : they can express all their wants by various cadences ; he could do as much that way, and more by signs. He could well explain himself ; and with the *capability* of speech, those cadences would soon go on to words, and words increase to language. The ray of reason would produce this. Some have held that the animals are capable of speech as to their organs, (and we know several birds can be taught to speak,) but they want sufficient reason to apply the means. We all know the pretty story of Robinson Crusoe, which we think so naturally told, and so it appears to us ; but the real person to whom that fate occurred gives an account exactly contrary. He was, for a time, the most miserable of beings, proceeding from the great and sudden transition from his former mode of life ; but that over, one of the most happy. He says, he never felt a want or pain, and he almost lost speech for want of use. It is plain, then, that man would not be or helpless or unhappy in such a state. Man's aim is happiness. Give him as much of that as he has conception of, and he does not complain or think himself wronged— nay, he is too apt to say, grant me that, and keep your labours and glories. If, then, happiness be our end, (as it certainly is,) and that be pretty equal, it is not cruel to man to begin even

in the utmost ignorance, far less is it injustice. I shall show presently the injustice would have been to have begun him with knowledge.

If, then, man did begin in ignorance, he could not afterwards know his first state but by searching back, for at the first he could neither tell nor record it; it would be lost to him, even as the early days of infancy are lost individually to us: and certainly, so far our present condition, as well as degree of knowledge on the subject, confirms this view of the case. We know just as much, or rather as little of it, as we must have done if we were sure we began in ignorance. Let us go on to savage man.

But little need here be said. The new-discovered quarter of our globe furnishes us with plentiful specimens of his existence, and none will dispute *he* is in a state of ignorance: he must, therefore, have begun in ignorance, or lost his knowledge; and where knowledge is real and general, (and real knowledge cannot be said to be where it is *not* general; the enlightened views, or right conceptions of a few individuals, is wisdom in particular men, but not man possessed of knowledge,) I say it seems impossible that mankind possessed of knowledge generally, and rightly informed of its principles, can lose it again. Nations may rise and fall—we know they have. Some arts may be lost—we know it has been so. But why were these losses? Because, though they attained to an admirable degree of execution, they were still ignorant of the principles. They knew not science. But now science is gained, and principles begin to be understood, and we have books and printing to detail and spread them uni-

versally, the danger of losing what we have once obtained seems over. Nations, perhaps, may still fluctuate; the rise of others more favoured by nature, and other causes may draw away commerce and make changes still; but should the advance of others shift the supremacy from those who have it now, mankind at large would not lose the knowledge won—perhaps never have the *real* knowledge; for we still see that by all that men have gained they have advanced. The light, on whatever subject, that some one mind has struck out may have been resisted, depressed, smothered; but not put out. The spark was still alive, and others, after a while, have caught its light, and kindled it again, to rise the higher. We see and know, in spite of all the errors and obstacles that superstition, force, and fraud, have raised on ignorance, that men have advanced—slowly, and with difficulty indeed—and are further now than ever they were on the road of knowledge; for it is only now that knowledge is beginning to be general, and that it never yet was general among any people, in any past age, can be proved to demonstration, to which we shall proceed. The savage, certainly, in nothing testifies *lost* knowledge, but, in everything, that he never had it.

Let us, then, take a glance at those nations who had attained *some*, whom we called learned, wise, polite, and were so in comparison with those around them. The Egyptians, the Greeks, and Romans, will serve. The Egyptian comes first; and, as first, his attainments justly raise our wonder and admiration. Yet, in some respects, the savage may have the advantage over the half-civilized. He is less perverted. A savage, no doubt, has a better

idea of God than the polite Greeks and Romans had, because what ideas he has he gathers from nature, but those nations had long been trained to the belief of the most absurd and debasing inventions of superstition. Ignorance may be said to be good—not exactly in itself: in itself it is negative—but it is the soil that can receive and nourish the seeds of truth when thrown into it; but the perversion of mind and corruption of manners that flow from false systems of error or fraud are worse and more difficult to cure than any condition of mere ignorance. Lord Bacon says—"It is better to have no idea of God than a false one;" and so it is; for if the right view be offered, there is nothing to hinder the mind from accepting it; but if the mind be previously perverted by falsehood or error, it is hardly possible to turn it from its distorted bent. The first races of mankind might, then, if more ignorant of arts and acquirements, have less of that perversion and corruption which false systems, received and established, necessarily engender. I do not know whether the golden age, which the oldest poets dwell on as long past, may have had its origin from such a state; but certainly when we seek to the fountain-head, we find the source purer than the streams. If we look searchingly into the religion of the Egyptians, who are the oldest we can reach, and perhaps the most wonderful of civilized nations, we shall find in it a great conception: like her own pyramids, an effort to achieve immortality; strong materials built on the rock of Nature herself; an endeavour to perfect man by carrying on her plan. The story we read in the Greek mythology, of Rhadamanthus, the judge of hell, and the

souls of the dead being carried over the river Styx, to be judged by him, was only drawn from what was executed practically by the Egyptians. With them a real tribunal sat on the body of a deceased person, to weigh his character, severely examine his life, and pronounce sentence upon him in proportion to his good or evil actions. His memory was accordingly consigned to honour or ignominy, among the living, who were warned at the same time to mark the end of all mortality, and to impress them by that awful spectacle to live so as to deserve an honourable name in this world and future rewards in the other, of which this scene was meant to be an epitome. The idea was grand; an endeavour to show to mortal eyes what we all believe actually to take place in the unseen world—retributive justice, and by the force of immortal hopes and fears, convince and persuade them to the practice of virtue in life. Their laws followed the same principle: an attempt to punish by retributive justice as exactly as possible. Their punishments for theft, adultery, &c., aimed to deter crime by making the offender suffer, as much as possible, the injury he inflicted. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," in the law of Moses, is drawn by him from the Egyptians, among whom he had lived. With them, if one man knocked out another's tooth, he was to lose one of his own; if he blinded his neighbour, his own eye was to be pulled out. There can be no doubt but that such laws, if they were executed with the same impartial justice which prescribed them, would be most effectual in abolishing crime. Why, then, with such laws and religion, do we hear of Egypt, at least of

later date, as the very hotbed of superstition, overrun with gods and their gross rites? What does this evince, but that ignorance was general? There were those who sought truth, and thereby an approach to it was made. There were grand designs, and even great things were effected: hieroglyphics, the first step to a written language, invented. Letters themselves are ascribed to Egypt, but the wisdom of a few minds, nor even the discoveries they open, cannot keep the truths they attain from being overwhelmed and abandoned—at least, practically, where ignorance is general; and that ignorance was general in all past ages, standing facts will demonstrate.

What are these facts? There is no book, no record, no tradition, no remains, however ancient, where they stand not out. The closer we look, the more we find this. That darkness that veils the past itself evinces it. Were it otherwise, the further we traced back to the source, the clearer we should see the light: like travelling through a vista of rocks, at the end we should see the day-beam. But it is not so; the further we go the deeper grows the gloom, till at last we are lost in profound obscurity.

These colossal facts, which, like the gigantic figures of ancient sculpture, speak silently of the old times they were reared in, are idolatry, slavery, and polygamy, which, with the lesser, but not less frightful images of witchcraft, spells, and sorcery, are the genuine offspring of superstition, power, and fraud, on ignorance. Wherever these exist, that age and people are and must be ignorant; and where is that book, age, or people of old (or present igno-

rant) times, that own not to the practice of some, or mostly all of these together? So much so, as never even to make question of them as matters of right or wrong. These facts, whose existence cannot be questioned, are indisputable tests; they are incompatible with knowledge. Can man, with knowledge, allow himself to be made his fellow's slave? Can he permit himself the barbarous injustice of polygamy, by which half the human species are enslaved? Does he ever, in a state of knowledge, believe in witchcraft, ghosts, and spells? Do not these decline in the exact proportion of man's advance in civilization? And is not their declension the gauge of this advance? If, then, these are owned by their own evidence indisputably to have existed in all past ages; if they are still found to exist among all nations yet in a state of ignorance, but never among the enlightened; if they cannot be admitted by knowledge, and are incompatible with it, these are the real tests of ignorance, and where they are to be found there is ignorance, and there the proofs of it.

Greece, the land of genius, and warlike, liberty-loving Rome, though they carried the fine arts to a perfection beyond what we have reached, (some of them, at least,) though they advanced in the refinements of life and the elegancies of luxury, still show, though they produced so many great characters and effected great things, general ignorance prevailed. The cruel manner in which war was carried on, and captives used, (and war also is natural, and ever belongs to uncultivated man,) the way women were treated in Greece, the gladiator sports of Rome, and the slavery and gross idolatry that existed in both,

sufficiently testify. In what a state of darkness must men's minds have been, to worship as gods the beings to whom they ascribed the most infamous vice by which human nature can disgrace itself, and raise living fellow-mortals to equal honours with their deities, and pay them equal homage ! Add that printing was unknown, books costly, and only in reach of the rich, science undiscovered, and nature unstudied—the case of ignorance, who always seeks to explain a wonder by a mystery—and what question whether ignorance still held not her general reign.

The darkness of what are called the Middle Ages is proverbial. None will dispute that it almost overshadowed all the light that had been gained. Let us pass to modern times, and I say they will fully bear out my assertions of the past. The immediate present amply testifies that such was the case. *We are exactly in the state we must have been in had man begun in ignorance.* The point we are at precisely tallies with it. Knowledge has just reached as far as could be attained or expected, through all the mistakes, corruptions, superstitions, fraud, force, established customs and prejudices which are engendered and set up even as sacred institutions, in a state of ignorance. Navigation and many great discoveries have made among us immense progress in civilization, but *general* ignorance is only now beginning to give way before *general* knowledge. It is only of Europe so much can be said, and only of a few countries in it. Are not Italy and Spain, near neighbours, under darkness and superstition ? Even among our own population can we not find gross

prejudices, not only among the lower but numbers of the better classes ? Is not education only beginning to be thought necessary for all ? Do not many oppose much of it, and are there not thousands who cannot read or write ? Is not the practice of traffic in slaves only recently abolished among ourselves ? And are not the rights of common honesty and justice towards more distant and weaker nations only just beginning to be thought of?—practised they are not. And so far from observing the laws of virtue held sacred in private life, as equally binding towards mankind at large, it has ever been held meritorious to invade foreign nations, seize their lands, and establish our own countrymen forcibly in their possessions, slaughtering and putting to death the natives, if they resisted, and defended their homes and families. Those who act in gaining such acquisitions are said to deserve well of their country, and receive honours accordingly. They think the same themselves, and talk with enthusiasm of dying, or having bled for their country, without even the slightest consideration that the same rules of justice and benevolence due to friends and country are equally due and equally duty towards mankind ; or, indeed, that in violating those principles towards them he injures many instead of few. As Locke says, the common principles of justice and humanity are openly and unscrupulously broken between different nations and distinct bodies of men. Even the great Columbus never seems to have even conceived he could be doing aught but well when he took possession of the new world he discovered, for his king, and in the name of God.

But what is the inference I would draw from all this? The truth of my principle—that man is a working agent in everything moral, as well as physical. The last will not be denied: we know man possesses nothing for the body but what he has earned by his own labour, and for all he would further obtain he must use the same means. Intellectually, also, this is allowed, because it cannot be helped, and it would be vain to controvert it: that Copernicus opened the right solar system; Newton found the law of gravity; Franklin, electricity; and all who have made discoveries in science, have done it by the exercise of their intellectual faculties, and that only by the work of the intellectual faculties can more be attained, it is impossible to controvert; for were it possible, we must suppose it would be done by those who do not also acknowledge, or hold it necessary, man must equally work out virtue and religion. But that he *is* a working agent in these as the others, I must contend, and that holding as impossible, and forbidding as wrong, any attempt to advance knowledge in the latter, is the cause why we stand still in mind, and worse in practice, upon them; and that while we exult, and with reason, on our rapid advances in science, and the improvements in the conveniences and elegancies of daily life, we have as much as ever to deplore and complain of the want of an equal advance in those most essential points, morality and religion.

Though the broad outlines of morality are clear to man's natural understanding, yet that knowledge can *advance* in virtue, is essential to estimate its excellence, and necessary to gain assurance of its rewards

and punishments, and thereby put us on practice, is demonstrable. And when we consider that men in general are indolent to use their understanding, apt to be led by fancies, misled by others, and above all, warped by passions, (all the natural failings of weakness, which is the state of infancy of being,) we need not wonder that beginning in ignorance, he should have still to learn in virtue, and religion too. To show this, we have but to bring forward the different *opinions* men have held as to virtue. Among savages, revenge is a virtue: suicide was a virtue with the Romans; their state of knowledge, and mode of life, may extenuate the *fault* in them; but whether forgiveness of wrongs, and endurance of the ills of life, rather than desert duty, be not a great advance in the knowledge of those virtues, neither Roman nor savage, when laid before them, did or do deny. Locke seems to have had this idea of knowledge advancing virtue, though he does not carry it on to propose the means. He says, "Morality is capable of demonstration as well as mathematics, and I have no doubt but if a right method were taken, a great part of morality might be made out with that clearness that could leave a considering man no more reason to doubt, than he could have to doubt of the truth of propositions in mathematics that have been demonstrated to him." And why will it still be said, we know all we can know in religion—we must not pretend to advance our knowledge there? Knowledge in religion is more necessary than anywhere else; for morality and matters of fact are hardly disputable: it is only by false views of religion that wrong can be made right, and crime turned into

duty, as the example of so great, so good a man as Columbus, above cited, shows. And will you say, *but now!*—that *but now* was said then; and had it been admitted, we should be now where they were then. Besides, what are we, even now? If we think religion can allow the violation of the first principles of justice and humanity, because it is *towards numbers*, or *by numbers*, or if we can allow ourselves *in such* violation against the laws of the religion we profess, either our religion is a false one, or we are false professors. And this is daily done by all. Among those who are accounted as most religiously serious, who practise private duties, and observe the forms of their religious rites, do these scruple to go forth themselves, or send their sons, to invade, despoil, and slay those who have never injured them—call it serving their *God* (what knowledge is this?) and country, and go to church to give thanks to *Him* for a victory in which those principles of justice and mercy, which are His attributes, are so broken and perverted, that had the perpetrators done the same actions upon individuals and at home, they would have been brought to condign punishment? It is plain, then, from contradictions so gross, that in practice, and, I am sure, equally ideally, we are far short of a right knowledge in religion. That want of right ideas, and enlarged views, may be one great cause of that deficient practice. If Locke says morality is capable of demonstration, I must say religion is quite as much so. He says, “Were the will determined by the view of good, as it appears greater or less to the understanding, which is the state of absent good, I do not see how it could ever

get loose from the infinite, eternal joys of heaven, once proposed, and considered as possible." He does not, however, go on into the search of what those goods are, nor endeavour to open views of them, which yet are the necessary and only means to bring men to the requisite degree of desire for them, so as to influence their practice. This I mean to attempt to do, but further on; in the present chapter I must confine myself to its subject, (man ignorant, and a working agent,) and proceed to the objection many will make, that it would be unjust, or unkind, to place man in such a state of utter ignorance, and leave him as he could to struggle through; and therefore assume it could not be so. I think this itself is the persuasion of ignorance, and shows the case has not been examined by the eye of reason observing nature. Let us, then, use reason to make this examination, and see. Is it unjust man should have been set here in ignorance, untaught, unaided? It would have been very unjust, had he *not*. To have began in perfect knowledge, perfect felicity, perfect any good, would be contrary to the design of man's condition in this world, and mar the end. What is that end? None question, happiness. Well, but how is that to be attained? By himself working it out. To have been placed here all wise, all virtuous, (which, by the way, is an impossibility, as virtue cannot exist without the performance of good, or resistance of evil,) all happy, with every blessing ready round him, and he only have to enjoy and partake, would be the extreme of injustice—and who would be the unjust? God himself, in giving what ought to be the reward of virtue to a creature who had, as

yet, done nothing to deserve it. This shows how deficient our knowledge in religion really is ; that the necessity of justice in God's own character, and his observance of it in his dealings with man have, as yet, never entered into the head of any one, as essential to him or them. So far the contrary, they think to honour him the more by the reverse view. It seems quite a settled and established notion, on all hands, that God may give any amount of bliss, and heap undeserved blessings, without the least infringement on his own character for justice. They call it mercy—free bounty—gifts ; the more spontaneous the gifts, the more undeserving the receiver —the more bountiful, the more merciful the giver. Thus they affect to exalt the goodness of God and their own humility, while they strut behind the mask of this assumption. “ May He not do as he pleases with his own favours ? ” I answer, all this fine talk is nothing but the desire of possessing good unworked for, and so endeavouring to account for the claim you wish to raise for yourself. I say, it is impossible that God would exercise one attribute at the expense of another—mercy at the expense of justice ; and such dealing would be unjust—we may say so without fear, for *he has not done it*, which is proof positive. Would man but look at nature, which is the work of God, and observe what he *does* do, instead of seeking to make out by his own fancies and wishes, he would first come to right views, and soon to actual demonstration. Do we not see, feel, know, that God has made man a working agent ? and are we not obliged, in all we do, moral, religious, or physical, to act as if it were so, whatever we say ?

It no more honours God to debase our nature below the standard he has placed it at, than it makes him kinder to lavish favour without desert. Would you call it hard on man, or unkind of God, to set him in such a state, so ignorant, so weak, to work for all? This shows the inconsideration of ignorance. Though man is justly, he is most kindly dealt with. He possesses, indeed, nothing at first—nothing is given away to him—but he is endowed with capabilities for all, and the means to obtain that all are richly provided for him to go to work upon. It would have been as unkind to give him capabilities without the means, as unjust to grant him possession before he had worked those means. But endowed with capabilities, and the means got ready to his hand, what can be kinder, what more just, what more ennobling, than this? And did man so possess blessings on this earth, given to him freely to enjoy, without work on his part, it must for ever preclude him from rising to any superior condition: he would have already what he did not deserve; and to be exalted still to better and better, without having in the first instance merited anything, or pains to attain it, is really monstrous! By the same inconsiderate rule with which you think to exalt God's goodness, really at the expense of it, you imagine you elevate man by making him an enriched beloved favourite, instead of a free working agent. "What!" you cry, "can anything that is not perfect come out of the hands of God?" Certainly not; but your ideas of perfection may be very imperfect—in fact, they are those of a child. To be endowed with all the gifts of Nature, fortune, and heaven; to be created perfect in beauty,

health, wisdom, knowledge, and virtue, (what contradictions!) and then placed in a state of perfect bliss, where he had only to enjoy ; how great, how excellent, do you think you have then made man ! How worthy of God ! Miserable conception ! Nothing can be more shortsighted than such a view ; nothing poorer than such a being ! As well might you rate the pampered yet enslaved minions of despotism above the hardworking but independent denizen of a free constitution, who, however small his possessions, has equal liberty and law as the highest ; and, if he works well, is far more really great. Had God given man good without his working for it, though he had raised his gratification, he would have debased his *nature* ; and which is the kindness of wisdom ? And if you suppose beings of higher nature, with higher powers, in the possession of perfect felicity, such would not be in that beatitude superior to man—no, *inferior*, since one can work out his own merits, and *deserve* his reward ; the other, be only the possessor of unearned bounty. I say, that being is of a nobler nature who is dignified with independence, (free will,) and able to work for himself, than all you can frame of existences, from their first origin, possessed of all the plenitude of bliss, or even—could there be such a thing—innate excellence.

Practically, this is an elevating stimulus to virtue, to show man he can and must work out *all* for himself; mentally work by his reasoning powers, physically, by his bodily ones. On his duties in these respects I shall enlarge more elsewhere ; my present subject is to prove man is a working agent, and

not only so, but better and nobler by so being, and God the juster and kinder by so making him. Some delightful deductions follow these views: the light of truth, like the light of day, always opens enlarged and brightening prospects.

The deplorable and debasing aspect which we have hitherto seemed to think it religiously necessary to give to the whole state and being of man, moral and physical, as abject, prostrate, vile, and helpless, a wretch who can think nothing right, do nothing good, in whom it is presumptuous on the higher subjects even to inquire, and impossible to improve, are done away, and changed into cheering hopes and elevating considerations. Misery there is in the world, but it is man's own making: that is one thing: to assign it as the decree of God, or the law of Nature, is another. In that case there would indeed be no remedy; but if *man makes it he can also get out of it*. In discovering the real dignity of his nature, his soul will rise and his efforts expand with it; he sees his very weakness makes his greatness; he sees the generous dealings of his Master, who becomes more reverenced in his eyes as he finds the real greatness of his bounty, that what he deemed severity or punishment are proofs how much that Master has honoured him; and what he lamented as the woes and wants of his nature, are the means of its utility and strength. He must still work, but now work willingly; not as a slave, but a servant; not by force, but by choice; not only to approve himself to his Master, but earn his own advancement and reward.

The sadness with which these people look upon

the lot and labours of man is as mistaken as their views of his nature. They are like some of the martyrs of ancient times, who, fancying the merit lay in martyrdom, pushed themselves uncalled for into the doom, and then groaned over their wrongs and sufferings. Surveying the efforts and achievements of man, they cry—"How sad! What pains! What vanity! What misery!" No such thing. With the enlarged views of truth, as it is animating to look forward, so it is beautiful to look back, to contemplate the labours of man, read, as it were, his testimonials, see what he has effected, and in that retrospect anticipate what he will go on to do. These remaining monuments testify, to his honour, that even amidst the darkness of ignorance, and the far worse perversions superinduced on that ignorance by superstition, he has effected so much, struggled through such opposition, and by the innate thirst of knowledge kept the torch of truth alive, still caught by some mind and carried on by some hand capable of kindling at and advancing it. It is as when one surveys the pyramids, or sees models, or reads of such designs, if not beautiful, lasting, of immense conception, an aim at immortality; or the remains of more costly and elaborate ruins of former grandeur; or when we behold rough-sculptured forms, the work of people themselves rude in the art, or representations of such people themselves, their tools, &c., we see man in what he has achieved. It is as pleasing to view the beginnings as perfection of arts. And why do we take pleasure in it? We see the first steps, and enjoy the satisfaction of having gained completion. In conditions of strength and possession we look back (individually and col-

lectively) to those of weakness and surmounted difficulties, with as much pleasure, or more, than forward to what those possessions may afford us. There is something more endearing in the first, though the last has the advantage. It is like looking back on our childhood : it is our collective childhood. But a proper consideration gives us a right estimate of the subject, takes down our pride, and removes our prejudices, by showing us those who went first, though they may not seem to compass so much, are as great as those who come after : these are more successful, because they had the advantage of the ground gained by those to go upon. But for them, we should have been where they were and had all that to do. The soil must be broken ere the seed can be sown. We read the names of Prometheus, Orpheus, &c., and account them almost fables, yet are they the names of geniuses who lived, discovered, and taught some truths—new, then—and made efforts to enlighten man ; as we see by the story of his stealing fire from heaven, and the sufferings awarded him on the rock, the accusation of impiety, and the persecution with which superstition has always opposed research ; and still, through all, men afterwards regarded him, and his name is regarded, as great, and a benefactor of mankind. In fact, the merit and greatness of those who begin discovery are as much as those who perfect it, however they may fall short in the amount of what they discover ; for it requires as enlarged a mind, and as strong exertion, to strike out new conceptions, or produce new works, in such absence of all positive knowledge and destitution of means to work with, as to perfect the

most elaborate constructions of thought, or finish the most admirable executions of art, when assisted by so many accumulated aids. The vulgar feeling of derision with which common minds are apt to look on rude, unfinished productions of past ages, or present barbarous nations, is changed to a sense of admiration and obligation—gives fame to them and emulation to ourselves. And the pity with which the narrow-minded consider them, even when allowing them merit, as very unhappy in not having the goods or views we now hold, shows only silly in themselves. What they did bore the same proportion of excellence and importance to their past, as what we do does to our past ; and if their merit was equal, so was their pleasure and satisfaction. Is childhood a sad state ? It is not accounted so, least of all by these inconsiderate people, who even wish to recall it, (I think mistakenly.) But the collective childhood of man is the same as his individual : it has its pleasures and its pains. While he is ignorant he is more enthralled, under more restraints, therefore striving to get out of them ; but he has less anxiety, less feeling of responsibility, and as his views of good and virtue are, in such a state, very different and deficient, less compunction : he suffers more pain from the penalties that follow the errors of ignorance, but enjoys more immediately, and is less troubled about the future. Nor must we go, if we would judge justly, by peculiar horrors and records of crime. History has chiefly to recount great and dreadful events, because such things produce great changes and involve numbers. We hear of thousands cut off at once by wars and desolations, and are shocked ;

but the individuals who composed that mass had their share of good and enjoyment in life ; and to be quickly ended is in itself a saver from suffering. Men form their opinions from their modes of life, and place their delight in it accordingly ; and war is glory and pleasure to young bosoms, and man in his uncultivated state. So nicely has Providence balanced the lot of man as to happiness, that every casuist allows that it is pretty equal among all ranks, and rests not in fortune or condition. Neither does it in time : different times have their different modes, feelings, happiness ; and I doubt not that a closer investigation and observation will establish it as a fact, that these different stages of man in time are, to his collective growth, what the stages of infancy, childhood, manhood, are to his body, calculated and necessary to bring the whole to perfection. As war, for example : uncivilized man is invariably warlike, which proves it belongs to that state ; and had war never been known, man would probably be too timid, nor even dared defence. There are also certain arts which seem to belong to certain states and times ; architecture and sculpture, for example : the latter, in the present day, bears no comparison to the masterpieces of the ancients ; and the former may be said to be lost, for whatever worthy of praise is produced now among us, is merely effected by imitating them. And I imagine the cause of this to be in the change of man's state as to religion. Heathenism was the great inspirer of architecture and sculpture : to raise temples worthy to bring down their gods to dwell in, (which no doubt was the hope and desire of ignorant man ; nor, considering how low his ideas of

God then are, at all to be wondered at;) or, failing in that, as the Grecians aim at sculptured forms which should embody the ideal conceptions of their gods; these feelings worked the inspiration of grand and sublime designs, and the most finished execution; and, of course, the art gained for religious purposes would extend to all others. But the inspiration is lost; man aims not at anything without impulse; works not for what he does not want. In gaining better ideas of God he loses the design or need of raising edifices for him to come down to.

But to leave this short digression, which I have touched on, as it illustrates man's state at his beginning, I must observe, that to open a truth always solves some question hitherto held to be mysterious; that of the inequality which exists between man and man is elucidated by showing him to be in all a working agent, while it proves him to be so. Some are so unthinking as to complain of it as hard and strange there should be any difference in their *fortunes*, and that all are not equal in riches, as if Providence had *not* made all originally equal, all with nothing, and *that* difference was not all the work of man; and if, as society advances, one gains more than another by his industry or prudence, it is fair he should enjoy the advantage; nor can it be deemed unfair he should leave what he has acquired to his children and family; and these natural consequences are good for society. The acquisition of territory and property seized by force, conquest, and held by power, is originally unjust, and bad for society—but this is also the work of man. Yet Nature herself appears to make a difference: in person, which when great is painful, as dwarfs, or those born distorted;

but even this is the work of man, by vice introducing disease into the constitution ; and though all might not be equally beautiful, as we see Nature in all makes that diversity, yet, no doubt, all would be healthy, well-constituted, and agreeable. But what shall we say when we go on to the original mind, and see a great and born disparity there, as there certainly is ? Much as education and culture can do, and much that is ! they are themselves acquisitions, so, though they improve, it is impossible they can *give*. No education or pains can impart genius of any sort, poetic or philosophic, in conception or deeds. Is, then, God partial ? No : his having made man a working agent in everything, (in everything he is agent, even to the giving of life,) explains the necessity of this. If man is to work out all in the moral as well as material world, how could that be done but by endowing some minds with greater strength than others ? Nature does this by her usual gradual process—diversity, which produces perfection in the whole. Every mind differs, from weakness up to the most superior understanding. We will not instance idiocy or insanity ; these, like deformity, no doubt proceed from disease, and are the work of man. All minds, though not equal, would be healthy, sound, able to comprehend, and fit to receive truths when laid before them. This the great mass are. To have made all equally strong would have nullified the end that man should *be* a working agent—there would be none to teach were there none to learn, so no work either way. That a few (they are very few compared with numbers born) should be endowed with superior capacities to strike out new truths, or open discoveries of which the

many have the advantage, is what we know to be the case, and cannot be esteemed unjust, while they are allowed no superior degree of what man makes his aim and end—happiness; nor in the means by which he works out that, his merit and future degree of reward—virtue.

So far from the greatest geniuses, or those who have most benefited mankind, being granted more happiness than others, they have generally suffered so much, that most people still account it a misfortune to be born with genius; and, indeed, their sufferings, though not *from* genius in itself, have usually been *for* it; so their sorrows have grown from the same source from which they draw their fame and admiration. I cannot, however, think them worse off than others as to happiness: the feeling of the possession of power before it is brought out; the applause when it is made known, and the consciousness of a future name; are the delights of genius, which it would not change. However, to those who have not this power, give them what is their happiness; they will not envy this hard-earned glory. If each has that good he is most capable of and most relishes, (and the taste follows the capabilities—what we feel we *can* do, that we desire to do,) while it is the many that enjoy the advantage, and the fruits, whether useful or agreeable, that are produced by all the varieties of genius, down even to after generations, surely there is no injustice or cause of complaint that a few are so endowed to benefit *them*, who would not have been the better, but the worse, had they wanted this superiority, without which mankind at large never could have advanced, as this is the only mode consistent with man's working agency.

What, now, is the practical result of these theories? for to assist virtue to practice is the great end of all truth, and what truth, if found, always does, by clearing our views. And I must say, I think these have the strongest tendency to this most essential improvement of man: they increase his independence. In showing man he must work for himself, you certainly put him upon it; in showing him he can, he feels more strength, and therefore more independence. I know most will think that to increase man's feeling of independence is to increase his pride, his self-will, and consequently his danger and his guilt. You fear this! But this, again, is arguing from the fears of ignorance, of superstition, not from facts: look at facts, and let experience and demonstration decide. Look at man first physically. Behold the slave. Where does man so degenerate as in those countries where slavery exists? Does it not breed vices in the character more pestilential than corrupted air breeds in the health? To instance a few individuals (master or slave) who have greatly overcome the influences of such a condition by peculiar strength of understanding or rectitude of disposition, is no more than numbering one or two who have kept their health in a plague, while thousands fall beneath its baneful contagion: A slave has every inducement to do ill, none to do good: what avails his labours or his virtues to him? another enjoys the fruits of his toils, and has to answer for his misconduct. To pilfer from his master, to lie, to snatch all the gratifications he can, and work as little as possible—these are the natural aims of such a condition. But when we turn to enlightened nations and free constitutions, where man works for himself, and claims the fruits of his

own labours, we begin to find courage, conduct, thought, enterprise, honour, and a just assertion of rights, the native produce of that feeling of independence. This will not, cannot be disputed in the physical world. And how can it be less in the moral? If man be not allowed the same degree of moral independence as physical, you make him slave there—slave where he most need be free; and I think the denial we have given to this degree of independence to man, morally and religiously, is strongly marked in his religious and moral character, in which he still bears the characteristics of the slave; in these he is most abjectly submissive to the dictation of his fellow-man, fearful, with an inclination, strengthened by restraint, to break loose into excess. But, *to increase independence is to increase responsibility*, and responsibility has the strongest tendency to induce men to virtue without forcing them, which would nullify virtue. Say not that moral and religious independence is towards God, and that makes the difference; no such thing: God is still the author of that noble independence which exalts man's character and his own bounty. Fear not this feeling will make man ungrateful towards God: is he grateful to him now? We certainly, and with cause, complain of the contrary, and the reverse mode is most likely to produce the desired effect. Take away free will and independence, you take away gratitude from man even towards God himself. It is natural, indeed, to ignorance, to think to increase the debt of gratitude in man by telling him the work in anything is ready done for him. But where do you find gratitude in men for work done to their hands which it was their part to do for

themselves? You may thus make them idle, but never grateful. Nor throw all the blame upon him. Take away independence from man, moral or physical, and you take away gratitude; you render him incapable of it; you debase his nature, and he cannot bring forth such generous fruit; indeed, where you take away so much more than you give, he owes it not; though his master may treat him kindly, he holds him still a slave. Say, in anything, you must not think, act, feel for yourself; your work is done for you, for which you are under a debt of gratitude which you must strive to repay, yet without any claim to reward; the obligation is inflicted on the man without his consent; he must work still, but without free will, without choice of reward, without presuming to ask, reason, or resist! No! you must give to man the work to do; give him the means; they are due to him; he *cannot* work without: then if he thus free employ them well, he will become meritorious, and his reward be just.

Therefore, to make man feel, he must work equally in the moral as physical world; that if he would gain wisdom, knowledge, virtue, religion, he must work them out himself, or not only lose those goods, but bring on himself the penalties for neglecting the duty of using his reason, (which is not considered at all as it ought, scarce *as a duty*,) and those of the abuses which always follow that neglect. Where is the danger of this independence? Nay, what a sum of benefit and improvement must result from thus calling forth his moral and religious exertions equally with his physical! To see how much of even our errors have proceeded from ignorance, relieves us from a great load; even idolatry was its

mistake; even the forming of images an effort to bring down God. The greatest vices and follies have sprung from the fraud and corruption of superstition; but by that rule, what may we not hope for of improvement when knowledge of religion is freely sought, and more attained?

I trust I have said enough to prove that, to begin at all, man must begin at the lowest step, in a state of weakness and ignorance, for "*he cannot be granted anything without deserving it, nor deserve it without working for it.*" And though this weakness and ignorance may appear at first sight humbling to man, or chastising of God, this is itself the view of ignorance; it is in reality kind of God and ennobling to man. If it makes his immediate condition more laborious, it dignifies and improves his nature, which, if not made worthy, all goods bestowed upon it were vain—vain to give, vain to receive. I say, then, in showing man to be a working agent, we show him in his noblest aspect—show what God has made him—a creature of capabilities, furnished with ample means, endowed morally with free will, physically with the same degree of free action, whose weakness and ignorance are yet the very means to bring him to action, thought, exertion, utility, to produce for him virtue, desert, reward! Behold man in the design of creation!





